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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether group interaction in completing cloze passages resulted in better completion than individual work. An earlier analysis of cloze procedure was replicated with 41 community college students of English as a Second Language (ESL). The population was randomly divided into two samples. Each sample completed two cloze passages, one individually and one in small groups. Group mean scores were compared with mean individual scores within and between samples. Results were strikingly similar to those of the previous study, with groups clearly outperforming individuals. Group scores were higher than individual scores for 93% of participants. While 80% of the individuals scored at the frustration reading comprehension level, 83% of the groups scored at the instructional level or higher. The groups also produced a greater number of responses than did the individuals. (Author/MSE)

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GROUP VS. INDIVIDUAL COMPLETIONS OF CLOZE PASSAGES BY ESL STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if group interaction in completing cloze passages shows improvement on individual completion. A replication of Jacobson's (1990) analysis of cloze passages completed by 55 graduate and undergraduate education students was undertaken, except that the sample used was composed of 41 ESL students enrolled in non-credit courses at a community college.

The population was randomly divided into two samples. Each sample completed two cloze passages, one individually and another in small groups. Group mean scores were compared with the mean of the individual scores of group members as well as between samples. Results were strikingly similar to the Jacobson study. The groups clearly outperformed the efforts of the individuals. 93% of the subjects had higher group scores than individual scores. While 80% of the individuals scored at the frustration reading comprehension level, 83% of the groups scored at the instructional level or higher. The groups also produced a greater number of responses than did the individuals.

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The cloze procedure was first introduced by Wilson Taylor in 1953 as a device to measure readability of a text. It has since been used to assess reader comprehension, to evaluate readers and to teach. Research studies show a controversy over using the cloze procedure as a test of reading comprehension.

A qualitative study by Ashby-Davis (1985) concluded that the cloze procedure was not a valid test for reading comprehension. Analysis in the study suggested that cloze actually tests thinking processes common to both reading and writing, and that it probably favors students with strong reading and writing skills. Thus, Ashby-Davis contends that a low score on a cloze test may actually reflect poor writing skills rather than necessarily poor reading comprehension.

In the foreign language field, there has also been controversy over the use of cloze to measure language proficiency. John B. Carroll (1972) is among those who question the validity of using cloze to measure such proficiency. He found the cloze instrument to be unreliable and too crude to measure comprehension of grammatical or lexical cues, or knowledge of language rules. Carroll suggests that cloze requires a special ability to use redundancy in a passage, an ability independent of verbal skill.

However, other researchers see the "crudeness" of the cloze measurement as an integrative measure of language proficiency. That is, the fact that cloze may not give a precise measurement of specific rules or particular points of knowledge is viewed as evidence that several aspects of language ability are involved in the cloze procedure. Hanania (1986) considers cloze to be an integrative rather than a discrete-point test, because it taps overall language knowledge -- grammatical, semantic and rhetorical. Oller (1974) and Chihara, Oller, Weaver and Chavez-Oller

(1977) have attempted to demonstrate that performing a cloze procedure is not simply being able to use local redundancy (linguistic cues in the immediate area), but requires an awareness of the flow of language over sentences and entire paragraphs.

Opposing viewpoints have led to research using scrambled-text cloze passages with contradictory conclusions. On one hand, Shanahan and Kamil (1982) state that the cloze test "is insensitive to the integration of information across sentences" (pg. 27). Chavez-Oller and colleagues (1985) in contrast contend that "there remains no evidence against the proposition that cloze items are indeed sensitive to long-range constraints" (pg. 189).

A later study by Gamarra and Jonz (1987) sought to clarify this controversy by investigating the sensitivity of standard fixed-ratio cloze procedure to variation in text sequence. These researchers demonstrated that the cloze test scores varied as a function of the sequentiality of the text, and found evidence that cloze is a sensitive measure of the "intersentential quality" of written language and the higher order verbal comprehension processes involved in reader/text interaction.

In the field of ESL, the cloze procedure's use to measure language proficiency or comprehension has become increasingly widespread. Questions continually arise as to what cloze actually measures. Jonz (1990) addressed this issue in a study in which he analyzed eight cloze passages published over the previous fifteen years. His findings indicated that across the cloze tests considered, the standard fixed-ratio procedure was highly sensitive to intersentential connections as well as word choices. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the kinds of language knowledge tapped by cloze completion is essentially the same

from one cloze passage to the next. Jonz believes that the cloze procedure produces tests which consistently measure language knowledge.

The cloze is frequently used in English as a second language in listening comprehension and reading (Celce-Murcia and McIntosh, 1979), as well as in evaluating comprehension of grammar (Cohen, 1980). Group interaction is recognized as an effective technique in all areas and levels of ESL (Bailey and Celce-Murcia, 1979) to promote student-to-student communication and maximize opportunities for language practice. The use of the cloze procedure in ESL instruction often involves group activity, such as discussion and brainstorming. A comparison of individual completion of a cloze passage with group completion of the same passage may provide evidence of the benefits of cooperative learning.

Combination of the cloze procedure and group interaction procedure has special significance in the ESL classroom. Advanced ESL classes at Union County College are commonly characterized by a wide range in the proficiency levels of the individual students. For example, the same class will invariably contain some students whose speaking is fluent but ungrammatical and whose reading and writing skills are weak. Other students will have strength in reading and writing and relative weaknesses in speaking and listening comprehension. A practical and effective method of dealing with such diversity in an advanced ESL class is to use group work so that the students can complement and compensate for each other's strengths and weaknesses.

If the combination of the cloze procedure with the group interaction procedure produces improvement of individual performance, this would have pedagogical implications for advanced ESL classes with students at diverse skill

levels. It would lend support to the ongoing emphasis in ESL on developing students' communicative abilities through group interaction.

HYPOTHESIS

To provide additional evidence on this topic, a replication of Jacobson's (1990) analysis of cloze passages was undertaken except that the sample used was composed of ESL students. Subjects in the Jacobson study were 55 students (25 graduate and 30 undergraduate) enrolled in education courses at a large midwestern U.S. university. The cloze passages were scored by the exact-word method. Results showed that the groups consistently surpassed individual performances. While individual scores ranged from the frustration to the independent level, each group score was at the independent level. Groups came up with more responses than did individuals, eliminated illogical responses, and appeared to interact with larger chunks of text.

In this study, it was hypothesized that when advanced ESL students at a New Jersey community college completed a cloze passage twice, first individually and subsequently in a small group, the group mean score would not be equivalent to the mean of the individual scores of the group members.

DEFINITIONS

In this study, the term cloze procedure refers to the deletion of words from a text containing a minimum of 250 words, according to a fixed-ratio (every nth word), and replacement of the words with blanks uniform in length. The first and last sentences of the passage are left intact. Advanced ESL students refer to

students whose native language is other than English and who are enrolled in the highest level non-credit ESL courses.

SUBJECTS

The participants in this study were 41 (30 female and 11 male) ESL students enrolled in two classes at Union County College. These classes were two sections of the highest level non-credit ESL courses at the college. All subjects were members of intact classes in which group work was regularly done. All socioeconomic levels were included, the exact percentages of which are unknown. Subjects either placed into the classes based on the results of an ESL placement test administered to new students, or passed prerequisite courses.

PROCEDURES

The population was randomly divided into two samples. In sample one, each subject completed a cloze passage individually without a time limit. The 265-word passage was constructed by adapting an article from an advanced level ESL text (Karant, 1985). The passage content was representative of material that would typically be used in the intact classes. The first and last sentences of the passage were left intact and a title, "Hired Santas," was added. A total of 43 words were deleted. Subjects were instructed to replace each blank with only one word.

The subjects in sample two formed small groups (three or four students) and completed the same cloze passage. They were instructed to discuss the passage and come to a group decision on each word choice. While each group member was given a copy of the passage to refer to during the discussion, subjects were told to

submit only one completed answer sheet for each group with signatures of all group members.

The activity was repeated using a second passage of 272 words from the Karant text with samples exchanging activities: sample two worked independently, sample one in small groups.

Group and individual passages were scored twice -- by the exact-word method and by the acceptable-word method. Lists of acceptable responses were established by examining the cloze passages completed by native English speakers enrolled in three sections of freshman composition classes at the college.

Group mean scores were compared with the mean of the individual scores of group members as well as between samples for treatments using t tests of mean differences.

Group item responses were compared with individual item responses.

RESULTS

Table I shows the comparison of the exact-response scores of the individual cloze tests with the same group's acceptable-response scores. As can be seen, there

TABLE I
EXACT & ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE SCORES

Individual Cloze Tests Sample 1 (n=21)	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Exact response score	21.10	9.03	2.66
Acceptable response score	30.19	12.81	

was a nine-point mean difference between the scores in favor of the acceptable-response scoring, and t indicating a significance at the .01 level. This was consistent with reported studies such as Oller (1973), Bachman (1982, 1985), Brown (1983) and Jonz (1990) which have found acceptable-response scoring to be more appropriate than exact-response scoring for ESL students. Therefore, although the Jacobson study of native English speakers used exact-word scores, this study of ESL subjects used acceptable-response scores.

As can be seen from Tables II and III, no significant differences were found between the samples for individual or group scores. In the individual scores in

TABLE II
INDIVIDUAL SCORES

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Sample 1 (n = 21)	30.19	12.81	.55
Sample 2 (n = 20)	32.30	11.93	

TABLE III
GROUP SCORES

Individual Cloze Tests Sample 1 (n=21)	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Sample 1 (n = 6)	56.50	11.34	1.49
Sample 2 (n = 6)	47.00	10.75	

Table II, there was a two-point mean difference between samples. In the group scores in Table III, there was a nine-point mean difference between samples. In each case, the difference was not significant.

As shown in Table IV, however, there was a fifteen-point mean difference between individual and group mean scores in favor of the group scores and which

TABLE IV
GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL SCORES

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Individual	32.61	12.52	3.21
Group	47.00	12.16	

sig. < .01

had a probability of < .002. The groups clearly outperformed the individuals; in fact, only three of the 41 subjects had higher individual scores than group scores. These results are very similar to those of the Jacobson study in which 52 of the 55 subjects achieved greater group scores than individual scores.

Individual scores ranged from 11% to 61% with a wide distribution of scores, as shown on the following page:

Percentage Score	Number of Subjects
11	1
12	3
16	2
19	1
21	3
23	2
24	1
25	2
26	3
28	1
30	3
32	1
33	4
35	3
37	1
39	1
43	1
46	2
49	1
51	3
54	1
61	1

Group scores ranged from 35% to 72%:

Percentage Score	Number of Groups
35	1
39	1
44	1
46	3
52	1
53	1
54	1
65	1
69	1
72	1

Table V shows the percentages of individual and group scores at three levels of reading comprehension as established by Bormuth (in Jacobson, 1990). According to Bormuth, scores below 44% are at the frustration level, scores

between 44% and 57% are at the instructional level, and scores above 57% are at the independent level.

TABLE V
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP READING COMPREHENSION LEVELS

Reading Comprehension Level	Individual Percentages	Group Percentages
Frustration	80	17
Instructional	17	58
Independent	3	25

Thus, as can be seen, 80% of individuals scored at the frustration level, while 83% of the groups scored at the instructional level or higher. These differences in reading levels between individuals and groups in favor of the group scores are considerably greater than those in the Jacobson study.

In another similarity to the Jacobson study, the groups in this study produced a greater number of responses than did the individuals. The number of items left blank by groups ranged from zero to ten, with an average of three blanks per group. In contrast, the individual papers ranged from zero to 27 blanks, with an average of 12 blanks per individual.

If blanks are categorized according to word form of the original passage, the greatest number of blanks were nouns. There were 142 noun blanks on the individual papers and 23 on the group papers. For individuals, additional blanks were 58 for articles and connectives, 42 for verbs, 40 for adjectives, 32 for adverbs, and 24 for prepositions. On the group papers, there were 10 blanks for

adjectives, three for articles and connectives, two for adverbs, two for verbs and one for prepositions.

In categorizing correct responses on the individual and group papers according to word forms, the following numbers were found:

	Individuals	**Groups**
Nouns	170	102
Articles and Connectives	137	58
Preposition	85	42
Adjectives	75	28
Verbs	48	25
Adverbs	19	11

The word forms for all blanks in the original cloze passages can be categorized as follows:

Nouns	33
Articles and Connectives	20
Prepositions	10
Adjectives	10
Verbs	10
Adverbs	6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of the results of this study, the null hypothesis that group mean scores would not be equivalent to the mean of individual scores was accepted. The relationship between individual and group scores was consistent. 38 of 41 subjects had higher group scores than individual scores; in addition, while most individuals (80%) scored at the frustrational reading level, 83% of the groups scored at the instructional level or higher. Thus, results of this study suggest that group completion of a cloze passage by ESL students tends to improve on individual completion.

While these are similar conclusions to the Jacobson study, comparison of the two studies reveals some interesting variations. The differences between the group and individual performances in the Jacobson study were significantly in favor of the groups, but not to as great an extent as in the study of ESL students. As for the reading levels of the group and individual scores, 100% of the groups in Jacobson's study scored in the independent range; 90 to 96% of the individuals scored at the instructional level or higher, and 4% to 10% of individuals scored at the frustration level. Overall, scores on the cloze procedure in the Jacobson study were much higher than group or individual scores in this study. However, this is not a surprising difference considering that the subjects were native English speakers at the undergraduate and graduate level, in contrast to advanced ESL students in non-credit courses at a community college.

Furthermore, Jacobson noted that the subjects "were almost certainly familiar with all the vocabulary used in the cloze passage" (p. 249). The reverse is more likely true for the ESL subjects; that is, results as well as observations of the group interaction indicate that not one subject was familiar with all of the vocabulary. Therefore, group interaction appears to benefit ESL subjects who individually have a considerable amount of difficulty with a cloze procedure. This study supports Jacobson's finding that advantages of group interaction were most apparent for less sophisticated language users. In her study, the undergraduate subjects showed the greatest amount of improvement when individual and group products were compared.

Another difference between the two studies was that Jacobson used one cloze passage which the subjects completed twice, first individually, then in small

groups, Thus, the improvement might have been the result of the practice effect. In the present study, however, subjects completed two cloze passages on the same topic and adapted from the same source. Results of this study lend support to the hypothesis that improvement in the Jacobson study was not due to the practice effect, since similar results were obtained.

Combination of the cloze procedure and the group interaction procedure in this study of ESL subjects produced improvement of individual performance and therefore supports the ongoing emphasis in the field of ESL on developing students' communicative abilities through group interaction. This appears to be especially true for students at diverse skill levels. Although all of the subjects were advanced ESL students, having either passed prerequisite courses or placed into the advanced class on the basis of a placement test, they were by no means homogeneous. They varied in native countries, cultures, languages, educational background, length of time in the United States, as well as oral and written proficiency.

The 41 subjects in this study represented 17 countries and 15 native languages. Educational background ranged from college graduate to 10th grade. Length of time in the United States was between three months and ten years. Oral English proficiency varied from fluent and ungrammatical to halting and grammatical. Reading and writing proficiency also varied widely. Results of this study indicate that such students benefit from each other's strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Group interaction is an added resource.

CLOZE INSTRUCTION: RELATED RESEARCH

In the thirty-eight years since Wilson Taylor (1953) first introduced the cloze, it has become a classic procedure and the subject of countless studies. As introduced by Taylor, the cloze procedure involves "deleting an equal number of words. . .by some essentially random counting-out system. . .without any regard for the functions or meanings of the specific words" (pg. 416). Studies involving the cloze have used the procedure in its original form as well as variations such as nonrandom and multiple choice cloze.

The greatest number of studies have involved the use of cloze in the measurement of second language proficiency. While Taylor devised the cloze procedure to examine the readability of English English texts, he suggested the possibility of using the procedure to measure second language proficiency in 1956.

Much research in the fields of English as a second language and foreign language teaching has established the cloze procedure as a valid and reliable measure of language proficiency. Studies by Darnell (1968), Oller (1972), Briere and Hinofotis (1979), Mullen (1979), Bachman (1985) and Hanania and Shikhani (1986) indicate that results of cloze tests correlate highly (.70 or better) with batteries of overall placement.

In the Darnell study, subjects were forty-eight foreign students at the University of Colorado who took a cloze test and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The cloze was scored on a previous administration of the same test to native English speakers. Results showed significant (.83) correlation between the cloze test and the TOEFL scores.

In the Oller study, 398 foreign graduate and undergraduate students at UCLA were randomly given one of three cloze tests of varied difficulty (4th grade,

5th-6th grade, and 7th-8th grade level) in addition to the University of California ESL Placement Examination (ESLPE). Analysis of data showed high correlations between the cloze scores and the ESLPE scores. These results strongly support the use of the cloze as a test for ESL proficiency.

Oller's positive view of the use of the cloze in ESL proficiency testing is supported by research of Stubbs and Tucker (1974). This study investigated the validity of the cloze technique in English proficiency assessment for an Arabic-speaking population. Subjects, 155 applicants to the American University of Beirut, were given a cloze test as part of the English Entrance Examination. The cloze was scored twice, by the exact-word method and by the acceptable-response method. Results showed significant positive correlation between the exact-word cloze scores and total English Entrance Examination scores (.71), and between total EEE scores and acceptable-response cloze scores (.76).

A study by Mullen (1979) expanded Oller's research to include the oral interview and composition. 154 adult ESL students were evaluated for oral proficiency with an oral interview and tested for writing proficiency with a composition task. In addition, each subject completed a cloze test consisting of two passages, one at 7th grade level, the other at 12th grade level. Results indicated that the correlation between the subject and cloze scores was .78.

Hanania and Shikhania (1986) investigated the relationship of a cloze test to a writing test and a standardized test taken by students applying for admission to the American University of Beirut. Subjects were given all three tests at the same session. Results showed high correlation between tests -- .79 for the standardized test and the cloze, .73 for the standardized test and the writing exam, and .68 for

the cloze and writing. Furthermore, analysis showed significant overlap among the three tests and that combination of any two sets of scores increased the predictability of the third. In a study reported by Bachman (1985), 812 nonnative graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Illinois took two cloze tests constructed with different deletion procedures. 751 of the subjects also took the University of Illinois Placement Test (EPT) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Comparison of scores on the cloze tests with the other tests showed correlation of .72 or higher.

Briere and Hinofotis (1979) sought to determine to what extent it is possible to establish cutoff points with a cloze test so that the cloze could be used to place students in ESL classes according to their proficiency levels. In addition, they investigated the extent to which the cloze-based placement procedure corresponded to existing placement procedures at the schools in the study. Data was collected at UCLA, the University of Southern California and Southern Illinois University. Students at the three schools varied in native language backgrounds and in level of English language proficiency from beginners to those ready to begin university studies. Results showed high correlations of cloze tests with placement exams: .83 for UCLA, .78 for USC, and .80 for SIU. However, there was no clearly preferable procedure for establishing cutoff points for the cloze test among the three procedures used.

Studies on the use of the cloze in assessing language proficiency have not been limited to English as a second or foreign language. Briere, Clausing et al (1978) investigated the cloze procedure in foreign language proficiency tests of native speakers of English. The study sought to determine if cloze tests were

sensitive enough to separate the achievement scores of students at varied levels of German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Results of exact-word scoring showed that the cloze tests did discriminate subjects according to instructional levels.

Related to the use of cloze in measuring language proficiency is the research comparing native and nonnative speakers' performance on cloze tests. Using a nonrandom cloze, Oller and Inal (1971) administered a cloze test to both native and non-native English speakers in a study to determine the effectiveness of cloze in diagnosing specific grammatical problems. Results of the cloze tests, which deleted only prepositions, showed that native speakers consistently achieved almost perfect scores, in comparison to the non-native speakers who averaged 65% correct.

Oller, Bowen et al (1972) also compared native and non-native speakers in a study of native speakers of Thai and Vietnamese who were also students of English as a foreign language. Cloze tests constructed in English, Thai and Vietnamese were administered and response frequencies for native speakers were compared with response frequencies for non-native speakers. Subjects took comparable cloze tests in English and their native language. Results indicated that translating a cloze passage from one language to another yields two tests of essentially equivalent difficulty level for native speakers of the respective languages. Furthermore, the responses of native speakers proved to be rarely completely ungrammatical, while those of the non-native speakers often were ungrammatical.

Chihara, Weaver and Chavez-Oller (1977) studied the normal order text and scrambled text cloze tests of native English speakers and adult non-native speakers studying English in Japan. The study sought to determine the sensitivity of cloze items to constraints across sentence boundaries. The scores of the native speakers

showed the greatest difference between the scrambled text and normal order cloze tests, indicating that the more proficient the subject, the more he benefits from constraints across sentence boundaries.

Cloze tests as defined by Taylor were used in an extensive investigation by Alderson (1980) of native and nonnative English speakers. Subjects were 360 nonnative speakers enrolled in universities and colleges in Britain, and 360 native speakers enrolled in secondary school in Scotland. A series of cloze tests were designed from texts of three difficulty levels. The tests were constructed with four deletion procedures each -- every 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th word -- and scored five ways, including exact word and acceptable response. Results showed that native and nonnative English speakers performed similarly on the tests. There was no clear separation of native from nonnative speakers.

Jonz (1987) studied the cloze tests of native and non-native English speakers enrolled in three universities in Texas. Subjects were administered two cloze tests, one a standard fixed-ratio test, the other a test of purposely deleted lexical and referential ties. Subjects' prior knowledge was manipulated in that half of the sample was allowed to read the text from which the cloze was constructed before doing the test. Tests were scored by the exact-response and the acceptable-word methods. Scores of non-native speakers on the fixed-ratio cloze indicated about the same effect as native speakers' scores from reading the text before doing the cloze. However, on the second text the non-native speakers showed greater difficulty in dealing with loss of cohesive data than did the native speakers. These results supported the greater dependency of non-native speakers on text than native speakers.

Research on the best scoring method for the cloze procedure has indicated that for native speakers exact word scoring is most preferred (Taylor 1953, Bormuth 1968, Rankin 1974). Such studies have shown that the differences between native speakers' exact-word and acceptable response scores are not significant. In ESL, investigations by Oller and Conrad (1971) and Stubbs and Tucker (1974) indicated that the exact word and acceptable response methods correlated highly (.71 or better) with a standardized test, the English Entrance Examination.

Furthermore, in the Stubbs and Tucker study involving EFL students at American University in Beirut, a positive correlation of .97 was found between scoring for exact responses and acceptable responses. Similarly, Porter (1978) reported significantly high (.84 and .87) correlations for exact-response and acceptable-response scores on two cloze tests administered to thirty-nine students of English at a Polish university.

However, more recent studies favor the use of the acceptable response scoring procedure for ESL speakers (Bachman 1982, 1985; Brown 1983, Gamarra and Jonz 1987, Jonz 1990). Such researchers contend that scoring guides can avoid the problem of subjectivity by examiners. In Bachman's (1985) study of the cloze tests of ESL students at the University of Illinois, a scoring guide consisted of a list of acceptable responses based on the responses of a sample of native English speakers.

Jonz (1976) reported on the variation of a multiple choice cloze test which offered scoring and taker convenience. The study involved a thirty-three item cloze procedure that was administered to thirty-three ESL students entering an intensive

English program at a U.S. university. Subjects also took an established placement examination. The multiple choice cloze test took only twenty minutes to administer and score, in comparison to over three hours for the established examination. Results showed substantial correlation between the multiple choice cloze and the sub-tests of the placement exam.

An additional area of cloze research is its use in instruction as a technique to improve comprehension. Cloze is recognized as an effective teaching device in ESL reading (Hatch in Celcia-Murcia and McIntosh pg. 139), as well as in vocabulary instruction (Soudek and Soudek, 1983). Cloze exercises are also now frequently found in ESL reading, writing and grammar texts (Fassler and Lay, 1979; Pollock, 1983; Neufeld and Webb, 1984; Ray and Nardiello, 1986; Azar, 1989; Beckerman, 1989). However, despite recognition of the overall usefulness of the cloze as a language teaching device, literature searches indicate that reported studies on the use of cloze in instruction apart from testing have been limited to native speakers.

Bloomer (1962) used the cloze as a remedial technique with college students. Control groups received traditional remedial reading exercises and experimental groups did cloze exercises. Comparisons of pre and post tests showed that the experimental groups increased significantly in comprehension and total reading ability.

Heitman and Bloomer (1967) used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to measure differences between ninth grade students who used cloze exercises twice per week for a period of twelve weeks and those who did not. Results indicated no significant differences between the groups in reading or language skills, with the

exception of spelling. The experimental groups using cloze with deletions of modifiers or prepositions and conjunctions showed an increase in spelling ability.

Schneyer (1965) investigated whether sixth grade students who completed a series of cloze exercises would achieve greater improvement in reading comprehension, as measured by standardized tests, than students who used conventional basal reading material. A second hypothesis was that there would be no significant relationship between performance on cloze exercises and the five factors of verbal intelligence, vocabulary, speed, comprehension and word recognition. These factors were measured with the California Test of Mental Maturity, the Gates Reading Survey, and an informal word recognition test. Results showed that the subjects in the group who completed the cloze exercises did not show significantly greater improvement in reading comprehension. However, as to the second hypothesis, the performance of the experimental group on 10th-word deletion cloze exercises was found to be significantly related to all five factors.

Legenza and Elijah (1979) analyzed the cloze passages of second and fourth grade students to determine if there was a consistent error pattern within independent, instructional, and frustrational reading levels. Errors were classified into four types -- logical substitutions, grammar errors, illogical substitutions and blanks. Results showed predictable patterns at the three levels at both grade levels and for two deletion rates (2nd and 4th). At the independent level, subjects made significantly more logical than illogical substitutions. At the instructional level, there were no significant differences between logical and illogical substitutions. At

the frustrational level, there were significantly more illogical substitutions than logical substitutions.

Dewitz, Carr and Patberg (1987) used the cloze procedure with 101 fifth-grade students of varied ability levels in a study on the effects of inference instruction on comprehension. Subjects were given four treatments: cloze procedure, structured overview, combination of cloze and structured overview, and control condition. Instruction took place over eight weeks during social studies class periods of forty minutes. Results comparing pre and post tests as well as metacognitive interviews showed that the cloze instruction group had greater comprehension improvement than the groups whose treatment did not include the cloze. Furthermore, the study showed that comprehension skills gained were transferred to unfamiliar texts.

Research interest in the cloze procedure shows no sign of declining. Its popularity may be attributed to its innate simplicity combined with its versatility and sensitivity. Oller (1973) sees the development of the procedure as "nothing less than a stroke of raw genius" (pg. 106). Cloze taps a multitude of abilities, challenging the taker's skills at dealing with the lexical, semantic and syntactic aspects of language, his overall communicative competence (Brown 1980). Cloze has proven versatility in measuring text, assessing overall language proficiency, and as a teaching tool. The procedure is adaptable to a variety of teaching situations and purposes. Thus, the cloze has what appears to be unlimited appeal.

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APPENDIX

Cloze Passages

HIRED SANTAS I

There are 10,000 Santa Claus jobs in the U.S., and the number of applications far exceeds the supply. Many of the applicants _____(1)_____ unemployed actors. Many others _____(2)_____ like Christmas and children _____(3)_____ much that they take _____(4)_____ out from their regular _____(5)_____ to promote the Christmas _____(6)_____.

In the New York _____(7)_____, Western Temporary Services begins _____(8)_____ prospective Santas in August, _____(9)_____ choosing about 80 from _____(10)_____ field of nearly 600. _____(11)_____ candidates needn't be plump _____(12)_____ old or even male. _____(13)_____ has been at least _____(14)_____ female Santa every year, _____(15)_____ in full beard. The _____(16)_____ qualification is a deep _____(17)_____.

Western also hires Santas _____(18)_____ various ethnic and racial _____(19)_____. It isn't always easy _____(20)_____ find them, though. When _____(21)_____ New York office this _____(22)_____ sent circulars to such _____(23)_____ as the Negro Actors _____(24)_____ of America and the _____(25)_____ of Hispanic Arts, no _____(26)_____ responded. Ads in actors' _____(27)_____ publications were more successful.

_____(28)_____ Chicago department store, Marshall _____(29)_____, has never had a _____(30)_____ Santa. "We haven't had _____(31)_____ apply," says a Field's _____(32)_____. Says the manager of _____(33)_____ Temporary Services: "We are _____(34)_____, unfortunately, that we live _____(35)_____ a white man's world.

_____ prejudice carries over to _____ visitors. "If parents
36 37
insist, we _____ direct the children to _____ 'right' ethnic Santa,"
38 39
says _____ Macy's promotions executive. Macy's _____ year has
40 41
black Santas _____ Santas who know sign-language _____ for deaf
42 43
children. If confronted by a disgruntled parent or child, Western's nonwhite Santas are told to just say that Santa comes in all colors and quickly move the child on.

Hired Santas II

Although some Santas just jump into a suit and improvise, Western's recruits are tutored in the nuances of the trade. "This is really an _____ (1) business," says Andrew Cohen, _____ (2) manager of the New _____ (3) office. "We aren't street _____ (4); we professionals."

At a _____ (5) half-day session in New _____ (6), two dozen mostly scrawny _____ (7) were lectured on the _____ (8) of proper pillow placement _____ (9) learned some do's and _____ (10). Don't eat onions at _____ (11). Do wash your beard _____ (12) with Woolite -- frequently. Avoid being _____ (13) with other Santas in _____ (14). Even if kicked in _____ (15) shin, never make unSanta-like _____ (16).

There are plenty of _____ (17) for Santas to turn _____ (18). One hazard is the _____ (19), or "Santa sacroiliac," caused _____ (20) repeated lifting of children _____ (21) laps. And there is _____ (22) the overexcited tot who _____ (23) "diaper rash of the _____ (24)." Mr. Cohen advises: "If _____ (25) get the 'royal christening,' _____ (26) over your helper immediately.

_____ (27) longtime Santa in a _____ (28) store in Minneapolis got _____ (29) christening he won't forget. _____ (30) Santa, who works offseason _____ (31) an investment analyst, and _____ (32) to remain anonymous, once _____ (33) two "parents" who persuaded _____ (34) to pose with their clothed _____ (35) chimpanzee for a _____ (36). Everything went smoothly until _____ (37) flashbulb went off, and _____ (38) chimp went crazy. Ripping _____ (39) Santa's beard and losing _____ (40) of its bodily

functions, _____ animal shrieked almost as _____ as the frightened
41 42
employee _____ the camera. The line _____ to be closed off
43 44
_____ nearly an hour for _____ thorough scrubbing.
45 46

Despite all their complaints, most Santas seem to love their jobs and continue to do them year after year.

Adapted from: Karant, Priscilla. (1985). Headlines (pp. 113-115). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.